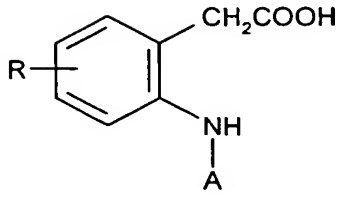
What is Claimed Is:

1. A compound of formula (I)



(I)

wherein

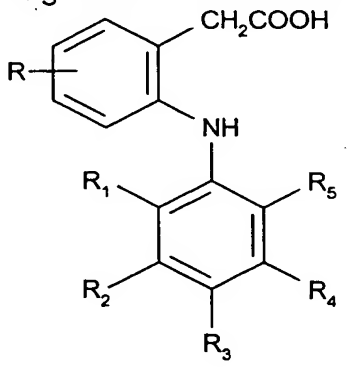
R is hydrogen, lower alkyl, (C_3-C_6)cycloalkyl, hydroxy, halo, lower alkoxy, trifluoromethoxy, trifluoromethyl or cyano; and

A is biaryl, optionally substituted β-naphthyl, bicyclic heterocyclic aryl, (C_3-C_6)cycloalkyl-monocyclic carbocyclic aryl, or (C_5 or C_6)cycloalkane fused-monocyclic carbocyclic aryl; provided that when bicyclic heterocyclic aryl is optionally substituted quinolinyl, R is located at the 5-position and R does not represent hydrogen;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; or a pharmaceutically acceptable ester thereof.

2. A compound according to claim 1, wherein A represents optionally substituted β-naphthyl, optionally substituted quinolinyl, optionally substituted isoquinolinyl, optionally substituted 5,6,7,8-tetrahydronaphthyl, optionally substituted indanyl, optionally substituted biphenylyl, optionally substituted (C_3-C_6)cycloalkyl-phenyl or optionally substituted monocyclic heteroaryl-phenyl; provided that when A is optionally substituted quinolinyl, R is located at the 5-position and R does not represent hydrogen.

3. A compound according to claim 1 of formula (II)



(II)

wherein

R is hydrogen, (C_1-C_4)alkyl, (C_3-C_6)cycloalkyl, halo, lower alkoxy, trifluoromethoxy, cyano or trifluoromethyl;

R_1 is hydrogen, fluoro, chloro, (C_1 or C_2)alkyl or trifluoromethyl;

R_2 is hydrogen, fluoro, chloro, (C_1 or C_2)alkyl or trifluoromethyl;

R_3 is optionally substituted phenyl or (C_3-C_6)cycloalkyl;

R_4 is hydrogen, halo, lower alkyl or trifluoromethyl; and

R_5 is halo, lower alkyl or trifluoromethyl;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; or a pharmaceutically acceptable ester thereof.

4. A compound according to claim 3 of formula (II),

wherein

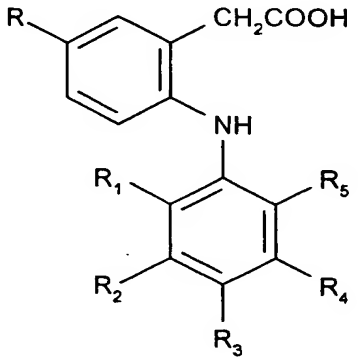
R is hydrogen, methyl, ethyl, propyl, methoxy, chloro, fluoro, cyclopropyl, cyano, trifluoromethoxy or trifluoromethyl;

R_1, R_2, R_4 and R_5 are, independently, hydrogen, fluoro or chloro; and

R_3 is (C_3-C_6)cycloalkyl, phenyl, or phenyl mono- or poly-substituted independently by lower alkyl, fluoro, chloro, lower alkoxy or (C_1 or C_2)alkylenedioxy;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; or a pharmaceutically acceptable ester thereof.

5. A compound according to claim 1 of formula (III)



(III)

wherein

R is hydrogen, (C_1-C_4)alkyl, (C_3-C_6)cycloalkyl, halo, lower alkoxy, trifluoromethoxy or trifluoromethyl;

R_1 is hydrogen, chloro, fluoro or (C_1 or C_2)alkyl;

R_2 is hydrogen or fluoro;

R_3 is cyclopropyl, cyclohexyl, phenyl or phenyl substituted by chloro, fluoro, lower alkoxy, lower alkyl or lower alkylenedioxy;

R_4 is hydrogen, (C_1 or C_2)alkyl, trifluoromethyl or fluoro; and

R_5 is fluoro, chloro or (C_1 or C_2)alkyl;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; or a pharmaceutically acceptable ester thereof.

6. A compound according to claim 5,

wherein

R is (C_1 or C_2)alkyl, cyclopropyl, chloro or fluoro;

R_1 is chloro or fluoro;

R_2 is hydrogen or fluoro;

R_3 is cyclopropyl;

R_4 is hydrogen, methyl or fluoro; and

R_5 is fluoro;

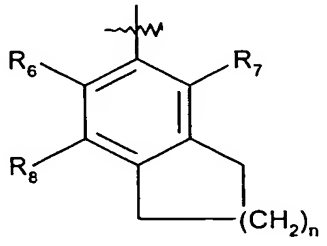
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; or a pharmaceutically acceptable ester thereof.

7. A compound according to claim 1 of formula (I),

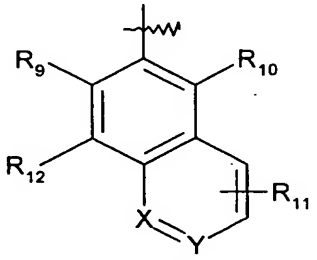
wherein

R is hydrogen, lower alkyl, (C_3-C_6)cycloalkyl, halo, lower alkoxy, trifluoromethoxy, cyano or trifluoromethyl; and

A is selected from radicals (a) and (b)



(a)



(b)

wherein in radical (a)

n is 1 or 2; and

R_6-R_8 are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl or halo; and

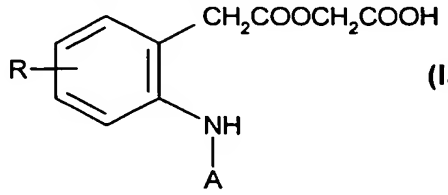
wherein in radical (b)

R_9-R_{12} are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl or halo; and

X and Y are CH, or one of the X and Y is N and the other is CH; provided that when X is N and Y is CH, R is located at the 5-position and R does not represent hydrogen;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; or a pharmaceutically acceptable ester thereof.

8. A compound according to claim 1 of formula (Ia)



(Ia)

wherein R and A have meaning as defined in said claim; or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

9. A pharmaceutical composition comprising an effective amount of a compound of claim 1 in combination with one or more pharmaceutically acceptable carriers.

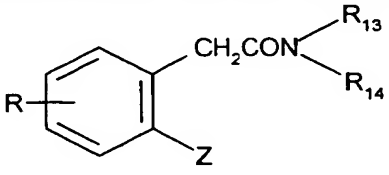
10. A method of treating cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2) dependent disorders in mammals which comprises administering to a mammal in need thereof an effective amount of a compound of claim 1.

11. A method of selectively inhibiting COX-2 activity in a mammal without substantially inhibiting cyclooxygenase-1 activity which comprises administering to a mammal in need thereof an effective COX-2 inhibiting amount of a compound of claim 1.

12. A method of treating rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, dysmenorrhea, pain, tumors or inflammation in mammals which comprises administering to a mammal in need thereof a correspondingly effective amount of a compound of claim 1.

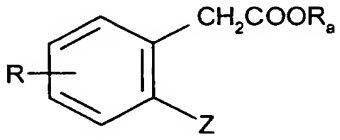
13. A method for the preparation of a compound of formula (I) of claim 1 which comprises:

a) coupling a compound of formula (IV) or (IVa)



(IV)

or



(IVa)

wherein

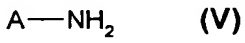
Z is iodo or bromo;

R has meaning as defined in claim 1;

R_a is hydrogen, an alkali metal cation or lower alkyl, preferably isopropyl; and

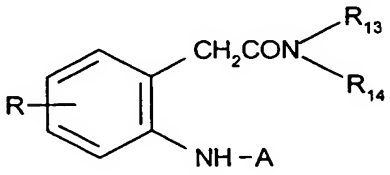
R_{13} and R_{14} are lower alkyl; or R_{13} and R_{14} together with the nitrogen atom represent piperidino, pyrrolidino or morpholino;

with a compound of formula (V)

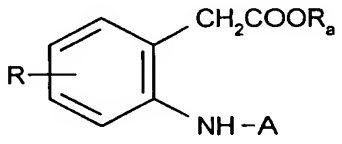


(V)

wherein A has meaning as defined in claim 1, in the presence of copper and cuprous iodide to obtain a compound of formula (VI) or (VIa)



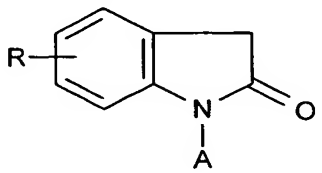
or



(VI) **(VIa)**

and hydrolyzing the resulting compound of formula (VI) or (VIa) to a compound of formula (I); or

(b) hydrolyzing a lactam of formula (IX)



(IX)

wherein

R and A have meaning as defined in claim 1, with a strong base; and

in above processes, if desired, temporarily protecting any interfering reactive groups and then isolating the resulting compound of the invention; and, if desired, converting any resulting compound into another compound of the invention; and/or if desired converting a free carboxylic acid of the invention into a pharmaceutically acceptable ester derivative thereof; and/or if desired, converting a resulting free acid into a salt or a resulting salt into the free acid or into another salt.